

Examination Of The Books

The Book of Life — The Book of Remembrance — Blotting out of Sins — Blotting out of Names — Judgment Precedes Resurrection — A Solemn Decree — Closing Work of Our High Priest

THE existence of records, or books, in heaven and their use in the judgment, is plainly revealed. Thus Daniel says, "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:10. And John says: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:12.

It is evident that the utmost importance is attached to the blotting out of the sins of the righteous from these books. When they are blotted out they can never rise up in the judgment against those who committed them; for men give account to God only for those things contained in the books. It is therefore certain that no individual can have his sins blotted out until the close of his probation. But when this work is wrought there must be an examination of the books for this very purpose.

The book of life is to be examined before the resurrection of the just. The words of Daniel render this point perfectly clear:—

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1.

We have seen from other texts that the investigation and decision of the judgment in the cases of the righteous precedes the advent of the Saviour. We have also seen that there is a time before the coming of Jesus when the sins of the righteous are blotted out from the books of God's remembrance. This is decisive proof that these books are subjected to examination before the Saviour comes again. But we have now another important fact. The book of life is examined before the deliverance of the saints. Daniel says, "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." The book must, therefore, be examined before the resurrection of the righteous to immortal life. This is another convincing proof that the investigation of the cases of the righteous precedes the first resurrection. This book is referred to in the following passages: Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; 87:6; Isaiah 4:3; Ezekiel 13:9; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 3:5; 3:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19.

The book of life is the final means of determining the cases of the righteous in the judgment; for all are delivered who are at the time of deliverance found written in it. But before this book is made the final source of appeal, it is itself to be tested by the books of God's record. For all the names which are entered in this book of life, of those who fail to overcome, are to be blotted out. Yet it is the record of these persons' lives that is to cause their names to be stricken from the book of life. Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5. We must, therefore, conclude that before the final examination of the book of life in the case of the righteous, there is a prior examination of the books of God's record to determine (1) whose record of repentance and of overcoming is such that their sins shall be blotted out, and (2) to ascertain from this book who have failed in the attempt to

overcome, and to strike the names of all such from the book of life. When the books of God's remembrance are thus examined, and the sins of the overcomers blotted out, and the names of those who have not overcome are removed from the book of life, that book becomes the final test, and an examination of its pages concludes the work of investigation preparatory to the deliverance of the saints.

We have seen that though the book of life is the final book of reference to determine who shall have part in the first resurrection, yet it must itself first be examined by the book of God's remembrance, for the removal of the name of every person who has not completed the work of overcoming.

1. The book called "the book of remembrance" is written expressly for the righteous, and is the book which shall determine, in their cases, the decision of the judgment. This book is particularly referred to in the following passages:—

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Malachi 3:16-18.

"Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" Psalm 56:8.

"Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof." Nehemiah 13:14.

The book of God's remembrance mentioned in these texts pertains only to the righteous; yet it appears to be a different book from the book of life; for though that book belongs alone to the righteous, it seems to be simply the record of their names (Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8), while the book of remembrance is the record of their good deeds. Malachi 3:16-18; Psalm 56:8; Nehemiah 13:14. But should we conclude that the book of life is identical with the book of God's remembrance, it will not essentially change this argument, for it would still follow that the record of the good deeds of the righteous, if it shows that they have overcome all their faults, and perfected the graces of the Spirit of God in themselves, is that which determines that their names shall be retained in the book of life, and their sins blotted out of the books which record them. But if the record be not such as God can accept, then their names must be removed from that book (Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5), and the record of their good deeds also be blotted out to be no more remembered. Nehemiah 13:14; Ezekiel 3:20.

The book of God's remembrance contains the names of all who enter the service of God, and of such only. Yet not every one of these follows on to know him. Many that set out to overcome do not complete the work. That record, however, will show just how far they advanced in overcoming, and how and when they failed. As it contains simply the good deeds of the righteous, it will show their acts of repentance, confession, obedience, and sacrifice recorded therein. When the work is complete, then this record shows them prepared for the examination of the judgment. This, therefore, is the book out of which the cases of the righteous are to be decided, and from whose record they are to be accounted worthy of that world and the resurrection from the dead.

2. The justification of the righteous in the judgment must precede the resurrection which is called "the resurrection of the just." By this designation our Lord speaks of the resurrection of the righteous. Luke 14:14. Paul states that this resurrection shall be at the coming of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:23, 51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:36, 37.

The justification of the judgment must be when the righteous are accounted worthy of a part in the first resurrection. But before they are thus justified in the judgment they give an account of their words. And this being true, it follows that God preserves a record of the words which we speak; also that our evil words are not blotted out until this account has been rendered. But the acquittal and the blotting out do, of necessity, precede the gift of immortality to the righteous at the advent of our Lord.

3. The decision of the judgment in the case of the righteous must be when the blotting out of their sins takes place.

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14.

God brings the conduct of men into the judgment by means of books of record. They are judged "out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:12, 13.

But the sins of the righteous are blotted out before the coming of the Lord. Acts 3:19, 20. And it is manifest that their sins cannot be brought into the judgment after they are thus blotted out. But the righteous are to be judged as really as are the wicked. Ecclesiastes 3:17. It follows, therefore, that their judgment must be at the time of the blotting out of their sins; for then there is an end made forever of the record of their transgressions. Now it is manifest that when this final work is wrought, it will pertain only to those who have fully repented of their sins, and have perfectly accomplished the work of overcoming. This work of blotting out sins brings our Lord's priesthood to an end. He must be priest till then. He is not needed as priest after that. But when our Lord does blot out the sins of his people, he must present their cases individually before his Father, and show from the "book of remembrance" that they have severally repented of their sins, and have completed their work of overcoming. Then the Father accepts the statement thus made, and the evidence thus presented in the case of each one, and bids the Son to blot out the record of that person's sins. This is manifestly the very time and occasion at which the righteous are accounted worthy of the resurrection to immortality. Their sins are thus brought into the judgment through their High Priest, and through him the righteous render account of their sins to the Father. This account being accepted, their sins are blotted out, and themselves pronounced just before God. This is the justification of the judgment.

4. There is a time for blotting out the names of some from the book of life, and of confessing the names of the others before the Father.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Revelation 3:5.

The time of blotting out names from the book of life precedes the deliverance of the saints. For at the time of that event everyone shall be delivered “that shall be found written in the book.” Daniel 12:1. Thus the fearful threatening of Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 22:19, is executed in the removal of names from this book before the coming of Christ. Those who overcome are the ones who have their sins blotted out. But those who fail to overcome have their names stricken from the book of life. The examination of their record must, therefore, precede both these acts of blotting out, for the express purpose of determining whether they shall have their sins blotted out, or have their names removed from the book of life. We have seen that it is at this very point that the righteous give account of their sins through their High Priest, who, from the book of God’s remembrance, shows that they have repented, confessed, forsaken, and overcome, their sinful course; also that they are thus acquitted and justified in order that they may have a part in the resurrection to immortality. Here is also the very act of the Saviour in confessing the names of his people before his Father and the holy angels that shall close our Lord’s priesthood and place his people where they shall be forever free from all their sins. For when the book of God’s remembrance is found to prove that the person under examination is an overcomer, it is then the part of the Saviour to confess his name before his Father and the holy angels, and the part of the Father to give judgment that that person’s sins be blotted from the record. Surely it is of some account to us that we have part in the fulfilment of the promise, “I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Revelation 3:5; Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8.

5. The righteous are not done with their sins till they have rendered account in the judgment. Ecclesiastes 3:17; 12:14; Matthew 12:36, 37. The only account that they can render is to show that they have made perfect work of repentance and of overcoming. This must be done before they are blotted out of the record above. Our Advocate with the Father must hold his office till he has saved his people from their sins. 1 John 2:1; Matthew 1:21. He cannot close this work till he has seen them accepted in the judgment. Whence it follows that his office of Advocate will constrain him to confess their names before the tribunal of his Father, and to show that their sins should be removed from the books.

6. When our Lord has thus finished his work as priest, his people are prepared to stand in the sight of God without an atoning sacrifice. The following texts make this very clear:—

“Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Micah 7:18, 19.

The Lord, in the promise of the new covenant, says: “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:34.

Paul, quoting Jeremiah, says: “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Hebrews 8:12.

“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Isaiah 43:25.

“In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” Jeremiah 50:20.

When these prophetic declarations are accomplished, we shall no longer need an Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator, or High Priest. Our sins will never after that exist even in the record of the court of heaven. Our lost innocence will then have been recovered, and we shall then be like to the angels of God, who walk in their original uprightness.

7. The accomplishment of this work of blotting out the sins of those who overcome is marked by a declaration of awful solemnity:—

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:11, 12.

These words virtually announce the close of our Lord’s work as High Priest. They cannot be uttered till he, as our Advocate, has secured the blotting out of the sins of his people at his Father’s tribunal. Yet we have seen that this work of blotting out is accomplished before he comes the second time without sin unto salvation. Hebrews 9:27, 28. The text under consideration is in exact harmony with these facts. The solemn announcement, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; ...and he that is holy, let him be holy still,” is followed by these words: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” The final work of our Lord for the removal of his people’s sins does therefore precede his return in the clouds of heaven to reward every man according to his works.